

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Hill City School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004-2005**

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Dates of On Site Visit: October 26 and 27, 2004

Date of Report: October 27, 2004

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.

Meets Requirements The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.

Needs Improvement The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.

Out of Compliance The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.

Not applicable In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Personnel training
- Surveys
- Information on home school students
- Student progress data
- TAT information

Meets requirements

The steering committee reported the district implements child find procedures on an annual basis through various media sources such as newspaper notices, annual preschool screenings, and working cooperatively with other referrals sources throughout the district. At the present time, there are no private schools or home schooled children in the Hill City School District. The steering committee noted the comprehensive plan identifies a system for receiving and documenting referrals. The steering committee noted 100% of the district staff meets state certification requirements or licensure requirements for the provision of special education.

The steering committee reported parent surveys indicated that two parents were invited to training programs offered to teachers, nine parents indicated they were not invited, two parents did not know if they were invited and seven indicated that participation in training programs offered to teachers did not apply to them. Seventeen teacher surveys indicated they have input into the identification of staff development needs and planning of activities related to students with disabilities, ten teachers disagreed, two indicated they did not know and three stated it did not apply to them. Twenty six teachers felt they have adequate training, information and supports to implement student IEP's and four teachers disagreed, one did not know and one indicated not applicable. The district's personnel have identified reading and math as areas of continued staff development needs.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle One, General Supervision as meeting the requirements.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews

- Student surveys
- Parent surveys
- State data tables
- Comprehensive plan

Meets requirements

The steering committee reports the district comprehensive plan supports the provision of a free appropriate public education for students who reside in the district for all children birth through twenty-one. Extended school years services are provided to eligible students.

The steering committee reports the district has developed disciplinary procedures and strategies that are implemented at all building levels. All district administration is trained on policies and procedures pertaining to removal of a student. The district did not suspend or expel students with disabilities for more than ten days.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The steering committee agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for a free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Student file review
- Evaluation reports
- Surveys
- Tests currently used
- Personnel
- State data
- General curriculum information

Meets requirements

The steering committee reported all tests listed on the prior notice were administered 80% of the time. 57.5% parents failed to respond to consent for reevaluation. The steering committee reports the prior notice document contains all of the required content. The steering committee stated sufficient evaluation data was available to determine eligibility in 28 of 35 files reviewed and 94% of files reviewed included functional assessment for developing present levels of performance. Functional assessment was summarized into a report in 28 of 35 files reviewed. Transition evaluations were conducted for 7 of 12

student files reviewed prior to their turning age 16. Parent input into the evaluation process was acquired through a parent form and/ or telephone interview. Evaluations were completed within 25 days after receipt of signed consent 85% of the time. The steering committee noted a multidisciplinary team report was available in 13 of 17 files which equals 76%.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees the prior notice document contains all required content and parent input was obtained through a parent input form or telephone interview. The monitoring team noted transition evaluations were conducted for students prior to age 16.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

The evaluation team must consider a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant function and developmental information about the child including information provided by the parents. Through the review of student records, the monitoring team found the district staff gathers data and in some cases complete diagnostic assessment to use as functional information in the evaluation process. During interviews, special education staff reported a lack of understanding concerning reporting functional assessment. The monitoring team noted a written summary of functional/transition information was not consistently included in the evaluation report or used to develop present levels of performance. The students' present levels of academic performance, their progress in the general curriculum or development of annual goals and short-term instructional objectives therefore did not link to evaluation. The monitoring team noted transition evaluations were not administered prior to age 16.

ARSD 25:05:25:06 Reevaluation

Reevaluations must be completed within 25 school days after receipt by the district of signed consent to reevaluate unless other time limits are agreed to by the school administration and the parents. The monitoring team noted the district reevaluation timelines were not met in four out of 20 files.

Issue requiring immediate attention

ARSD 24:05:24:05:04.03 Determination of eligibility

The district must convene a placement committee meeting to determine eligibility category for three students. A student is on the child count under the category developmentally delayed (570). The psychological report states "the placement committee should consider eligibility for a specific learning disability" and the IEP states the student is other health impaired. The multidisciplinary team report does not show documentation of the basis for making the determination.

A student is placed on the child count as other health impaired. The medical report indicates the child has been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactive disorder. However, the psychological report indicates a verbal score of 98 and a performance score of 96 with a full scaled score of 97 on the Wechsler Individual Scale for Children-III and the achievement scores on the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test II indicate scores in a range from 81 – 104. The Behavior Assessment Scale for Children was also administered and no scores of significance were noted. Therefore, the team did not show documentation of educational impact on achievement. The multidisciplinary team must meet to determine eligibility.

A student placed on the child count as orthopedically impaired and speech language. The evaluation information in the file indicated the child no longer qualifies for speech and language therapy. The team must meet to reconsider the evaluation information and determine eligibility.

ARSD 24:05:25:11 Observation for specific learning disabilities

ARSD 24:05:25:12 Written report for specific learning disabilities

At least one team member other than the child's regular teacher must observe the child's academic performance in the regular classroom setting. If the child is less than school age or out of school, a team member must observe the child in an environment appropriate for a child of that age. Through file reviews and staff interviews, the monitoring team noted regular education teachers consistently completed observations for students suspected of having a specific learning disability. The monitoring team also noted the written report for a specific learning disability does not include the basis for making the determination in three of five student files reviewed.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Compliers
- File reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- Consent forms
- Prior notice forms
- Parental rights brochure

Meets requirements

The steering committee state parental rights information was given to parents with every prior notice/consent and at every IEP meeting. The steering committee noted graduation requirements were addressed one year prior to graduation. The steering committee indicated a list of individuals who would serve as a surrogate parent if needed is not available at this time. The steering committee noted the comprehensive plan has procedures that meet the requirements regarding disclosure of student information. There have been no requests by parents to amend records. The district has had one complaint and one due process hearing since the last special education review.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for a free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee with the exception of the issues identified under "Out of Compliance".

Out of compliance

Issues requiring immediate attention

ARSD 24:05:30:15 Surrogate Parent

The school district shall establish procedures for the assignment of a surrogate parent to ensure the rights of the child are protected if no parent can be identified and the district, after reasonable effort, cannot discover the whereabouts of a parent or if the child is a ward of the state.

Through interview and file reviews, the monitoring team determined a list of individuals who would serve as a surrogate parent was not available.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Progress notes
- Early intervention program
- Surveys
- State data

Meets requirements

The steering committee stated the district provided written prior notice five days before the IEP meeting in thirty- five out of thirty-five files reviewed. The student was invited to the IEP meeting in thirteen out of thirteen files reviewed. Transition evaluation was conducted to gather information regarding the student's interest in eleven out of thirteen files. The steering committee stated interpreters were provided for limited English proficient families to discuss the educational concerns and need of the student. Parent surveys indicated parents felt comfortable about asking questions and discussing concerns at their child's IEP meeting and stated test have been explained in a way they can understand.

The steering committee concluded the IEP team included the required members. Teachers receive copies of IEP's of students they are teaching. The steering committee reported IEP meetings are held within 30 calendar days of receipt of the evaluation results and IEP's are reviewed within 365 days. Nineteen of nineteen parents surveyed indicated they received a copy of their child's IEP within a reasonable time.

The steering committee stated present levels of performance in thirty out of thirty-five student files contained specific skills in the areas of strengths, weaknesses and the students involvement in the general curriculum. Present levels of performance are linked to functional evaluation in thirty of thirty five files reviewed. Parent input into the IEP process was documented in 29 of 35 files reviewed. Goals are linked to present levels of performance in 35 of 35 files reviewed. Short term objectives include conditions, performance and criteria. Progress reports are available in all student records. Modifications and accommodations are addressed in 35 of 35 student files reviewed. One student surveyed indicated modifications and accommodations were made, ten students disagreed and one didn't know.

The steering committee stated in 35 of 35 files reviewed, special factors were considered and positive behavioral interventions were documented for students evaluated with behavioral concerns. State and district-wide assessment was addressed in 31 of 31 files reviewed and in 33 of 35 files reviewed modifications provided for state/district wide assessments were necessary for the student on a daily basis.

The steering committee reports related services necessary to benefit from special education was documented in 35 of 35files. Extended school year was addressed in 35 of 35 files reviewed. 12 of 16

general educators indicated the district has procedures in place to determine student needs for extended school year.

The steering committee reports assistive technology was determined a related service for eight of 35 students and hearing aid functioning was addressed in 35 of 35 files reviewed. One hundred per cent of student files documented the beginning date and duration date of services to be provided and specific description of special education and related services were documented. Justification for placement was addressed in 35 of 35 files review.

The steering committee reported the district notified parents of the intent to graduate a student one year prior to graduation in five of five files reviewed. Transition evaluations were administered in five of five student files reviewed and student centered life planning outcomes for employment were documented in seven of 12 files. Student centered life planning outcomes for independent living was documented in five of 12 files. The course of study was developed for students beginning at age 14 in 13 of 13 files. The steering committee noted a statement of transition services/activities was documented in six of 12 files for student's age 16 years old or younger if appropriate.

Needs improvement

The steering committee stated the district prior notice contained all required information in 16 of 21 files reviewed. Representatives from other agencies were invited to participate in the IEP meetings for students of transition age sixty-six percent of the time. 17 of 19 parents surveyed indicated they received information concerning their child from each teacher at the IEP meeting. General educators who could not attend provided input into the IEP process. 11 parents surveyed indicated teachers set high goals and expect a lot out of the child. Nine parents disagreed. 19 of 20 parents surveyed felt the services decided on at the IEP meeting were started immediately.

The steering committee reported transfer of rights was documented one year prior to turning eighteen in three of four files reviewed.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data that meets requirements under Principle Five, Individualized Education Program, with the exception of those noted below.

Needs improvement

Through file reviews, observations and interviews, the monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for items in need of improvement. Through file reviews, the monitoring team noted three prior notices did not contain required information, agency representatives were not invited to and IEP meeting in one student file and the transfer of rights was completed less than one year before the student turned age 18.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of IEP

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the assessment information, including functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. During file reviews and interviews, the monitoring team noted the present levels of performance were typically a very lengthy summary of the most current evaluation report and did not include functional assessment for areas of suspected disability. As a result, the annual goals and objectives were not skill based and were not linked to present levels of performance.

Examples:

- The student will apply various reading cues/strategies to interpret and comprehend text at the 4th-5th grade level.
- When given mathematical concepts at the 5th and 6th grade levels, David will develop his number sense to investigate the characteristics of numbers and then solve using the correct operation.
- When given new or infrequent words starting at 4th grade level, the student will decode using cues.
- The student will use appropriate mechanics, usage and conventions of language when writing for an assignment.

When developing the justification for placement statements, district staff consistently developed justification statements, however, did not use the accept/reject method and did not include an explanation of the extent, if any to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in the general classroom and in extracurricular and non-academic activities.

Examples:

- “Team rejects regular classroom setting and accepts the regular classroom setting with modifications....etc.”
- “The selected placement option (above) supports all new IEP.”
- “The team concurs the general classroom with modifications is the most appropriate placement for the students’ reading, speech/language and occupational therapy assistance. The student has shown to respond well and complete work efficiently with one on one assistance. The general classroom with modifications will help the student get this one on one attention he needs in reading. The student was retained last year and has made great improvements with academic success. For Speech and OT, this pull-out model will help the student gain the practice and response opportunities needed to correct his/her oral-motor, speech, basic concept, visual perception and visual motor difficulties. These kind of opportunities are not possible in the regular classroom even with supplementary aides and services. This will allow the student to take learning risks without embarrassment and proceed at his/her learning pace. The student will participate with his/her age peers in all other academic and non-academic activities.”
- “The team accepts part time early childhood/part time early childhood special education as the appropriate setting to meet the students’ speech needs at this time. With this pull-out speech therapy model, the student will be able to have the quiet environment with sufficient response opportunities needed to make the required speech changes. Even with supplementary aides and services in the classroom, the student would not be able to make the gains with speech possible with the pull-out model. The student will participate with kindergarten peers in all other aspects of her school day.”

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Surveys
- State data

- Comprehensive plan

Needs improvement

The steering committee stated 13 of 17 educators surveyed indicated they had received adequate training, information and supports to implement the IEP. Four of 13 educators surveyed indicated they had enough time available during the school week to complete necessary tasks. 6 educators surveyed indicated they had input into the development of the students IEP, 8 disagreed, 2 didn't know and 1 stated it wasn't applicable.

Validation Results**Promising practice**

Although the steering committee did not identify the district's preschool as a promising practice, the monitoring team noted it through interviews and observation of the preschool. The preschool program is open to all children ages four through five. Children who are three years old and have developmental delays have the opportunity to participate in this group if appropriate. There is one certified early childhood teacher and paraprofessional in the classroom. Special education services are provided as appropriate from the child's individual education plan. District staff reported the program to be an effective tool in providing appropriate developmental opportunities, as well as a tool for remediation of potential areas of concern and early identification of students with special needs.

Observation

The student, accompanied by a paraprofessional, was seated with his peers on the floor as the teacher showed how to do an art project. Then, the students were instructed to find a chair at a table and do the project. Three of the peers readily sat at the table with the student. With assistance provided by the paraprofessional and by watching his peers work, the student did the construction paper and gluing project.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees staff development and input into the development of the IEP are areas identified as needing improvement for least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.